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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 002514

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EG](#) [IS](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ON ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT,
IRAQ NEIGHBORS MEETING, RESCHEDULING G-8/ARAB LEAGUE REFORM
CONFERENCE

Classified by Charge Gordon Gray for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) During a March 30 meeting with the Foreign Minister regarding the induction of Israel's Magen David Adom society into the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement (septel), the Charge requested a readout on the latest Arab League summit in Algiers, as well as updates on a prospective Iraq Neighbors meeting in Istanbul and Egypt's rescheduling of a postponed G-8/Arab League conference on reform. Aboul Gheit offered a generally upbeat assessment of the Arab League meeting, listing several accomplishments yet criticizing the decision by nine heads of state to not attend. On an Iraq Neighbors meeting being planned by Turkey, Aboul Gheit expressed his intention to attend, provided the meeting came after formation of a government in Iraq and contributed to political stabilization there. Aboul Gheit did not rule out rescheduling the postponed March 2-3 G-8/Arab League Ministerial in Cairo, but complained about "eleventh-hour" criticism by the UK (as G-8 Chair) and asserted close coordination by all parties was a prerequisite for rescheduling the Ministerial. End summary.

Read-out of Arab League Summit

2. (C) Asked his views on the results of the March 22-23 Arab League summit, Aboul Gheit said he was very pleased with the outcome of the event, particularly the "peaceful atmosphere" in which the summit was held. Offering specific accomplishments of the meeting, Aboul Gheit noted the success of Secretary Amre Moussa in receiving financial support for the cash-strapped League to fund its programs and initiatives. Pointing to reforms of the League itself, Aboul Gheit noted the decision to create an Arab Parliament - a proposal that would take root and develop over the next five years, he said. The group of leaders, he continued, agreed to alter the decision-making process within the League away from consensus and toward majority rule, and had agreed to the creation of a mechanism for the enforcement of formal decisions taken by member states.

3. (C) Other positive developments, he added, were the endorsement by heads of state of Iraq's political process and the absence of condemnation of the U.S. regarding its relationship to Libya. Aboul Gheit cited his pleasure at the leaders' decision to lend their collective support to Egypt for membership in an expanded UN Security Council and criticized the absence of nine leaders from the Algiers summit. While the most influential Arab leaders attended the summit, he said, the decision by many not to attend only harmed themselves.

Iraq: Turkish-hosted Neighbors Meeting Must be Productive

4. (C) Aboul Gheit confirmed reports that Turkey was consulting with other members of the Iraq Neighbors group regarding its hosting of a meeting, possibly in April. Aboul Gheit noted that Turkey had floated April 18-19 as possible dates, but said he had a scheduling conflict since he planned to attend a ministerial meeting of the Afro-Asia countries April 20 in Indonesia. He also noted that a New Partnership for Africa's Development summit would occur around the same time. Furthermore, he added, an Iraq neighbors meeting should only take place when Iraq's political process had moved forward, a government is formed, and the Neighbors can contribute to political stabilization there. Aboul Gheit stated that he had no objections, per se, to joining such a meeting, but again emphasized that the meeting should endorse positive developments there.

G-8/Arab League Reform Conference Still on Ice

5. (C) Responding to the Charge's question whether Egypt would reschedule its G-8/Arab League reform conference originally planned for March 2-3 in Cairo, Aboul Gheit said

this subject was "sadly" not raised at the Algiers summit, as the GOE interpreted that the subject of regional reform had assumed a "lower priority" among attendees. Even though neither Egypt nor any of the other representatives pressed this issue, he said, "we will have to reflect upon how to do so; perhaps at an upcoming meeting in Amman in May of education and foreign ministers." Aboul Gheit added that if there was interest from the U.S., the UK (as G-8 Chair), and others, it would take communication and coordination to get such a conference scheduled again. Seeking to pin the blame elsewhere, Aboul Gheit continued that "eleventh hour" criticisms from the UK (not the U.S., he clarified) and a general "lack of engagement" on preparations for the conference from other G-8 participants had been unhelpful.

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GRAY